



Recent Trends in Material Flows and Resource Productivity in Latin America



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# List of acronyms related to material flows and resource efficiency

- **DE** Domestic Extraction Materials domestically extracted from the environment which are subsequently used in economic activity
- **DMC** Domestic Material Consumption (= DE PTB)
- **GDP** Gross Domestic Product
- MI Materials Intensity (= DMC / GDP)
- PTB Physical Trade Balance (Net Imports Net Exports)
- I Impact (environmental), in IPAT analysis terminology. In this report, the environmental impact considered for the IPAT analyses is extractive pressure, so I = DMC
- P Population
- **A** Level of Affluence of the population
- T Technological coefficient, in IPAT analysis terminology. This is a measure of the environmental impact (I) generated per unit of income generated. For this study, T = DMC /GDP, and so is equivalent to MI



### 1. Main Messages

The Latin America region accounts for about 10% of world consumption of primary materials. As a result, developments in this region do not have a major effect on total global extractive pressures. The reverse is not true. Even modest increases in the resources demand of larger regions, where transferred by trade, can have major effects on material flows in Latin America.

The region began the period 1970 to 2008 relatively inefficient at converting its primary resources to income, and became progressively less efficient at extracting value as the period progressed. Examples of individual countries defying this trend, while rare in this region, do exist and merit closer study.

The major increase in commodity prices over the first decade of the 21st century slowed the rate at which the region's resource efficiency declined, but did not reverse it. Any reversion to the declining terms of trade which characterized the later decades of the 20th century would likely see environmental pressures in the region escalate rapidly just to maintain current material living standards.

The rapid increases in population in the region which drove growing environmental pressures in the earlier decades have eased greatly, so that in recent years the main driver has been growth in per capita incomes and the higher per capita consumption levels that engenders.

The findings of this report are based on the first material flows database, which has been specifically designed to cover the great majority of countries in Latin America, as well as additional countries in the Caribbean region, using standardized material flows accounting methodologies.

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